

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended) A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been previously refined to a powdery mass, and with the solids being not significantly coated with the fat, comprising the step of subjecting ~~characterized in that~~ the powdery mass ~~is submitted to an elongational flow effective, as such, to provide breaking break up of the~~ agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat thereby resulting in the production of a pasty mass ~~with~~ and coating of the solids with the fat.

Claim 2 (currently amended) Method according to claim 1, wherein the predominant elongational flow is achieved by forcing a flow of the fat based mixture through a plurality of flow constrictions positioned in parallel ~~and/or~~ series relative to said flow.

Claim 3 (currently amended) Method according to claim 1 ~~2~~, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate.

Claim 4 (currently amended) Method according to ~~any of claims 1 to~~ claim 3, wherein the at least one die plate comprises a plurality of small size holes having a size of from 0.5 to 20 mm.

Claim 5 (currently amended) Method according to claim 4, wherein the holes form a tapered, parallel, flared profile ~~or any combinations thereof~~, as viewed from ~~the~~ an inlet to ~~the~~ an outlet of the holes.

Claim 6 (currently amended) Method according to claim 3 ~~5~~, wherein the at least one die plate comprises ~~of from 1~~ up to 200 holes.

Claim 7 (currently amended) Method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 4 ~~to 6~~ wherein there are ~~is~~ provided at least two separate die plates positioned in series in a barrel for serial passage of the fat based product mixture through the die plates.

Claim 8 (currently amended) Method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 3 ~~to 7~~, wherein comprising the step of forcing ~~of~~ the mixture through the at least one die plate ~~is carried out by the use of~~ using pressure generating means exerting a positive pressure upstream of the die plate.

Claim 9 (currently amended) Method according to claim 8, wherein the pressure generating means is selected from the group consisting of a gear pump, a lobe pump, a piston pump and ~~or~~ an extruder.

Claim 10 (currently amended) Method according to claim ~~8 9~~, ~~wherein comprising~~ the steps of adding solid ingredients ~~are added~~ and ~~mixed~~ mixing the solid ingredients with the fat ~~and optionally emulsified~~ in a mixer prior to being pressurized in the pressure generating means.

Claim 11 (currently amended) Method according to claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~, wherein an ~~the~~ average particle size of the solids of the refined fat based mixture has been reduced to less than 50 microns.

Claim 12 (currently amended) Method according to claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~, wherein the fat based mixture consists ~~essentially consists of~~ a component chosen from the group consisting of refined chocolate and/or chocolate-like powder ~~compound compounds~~.

Claim 13 (currently amended) Method according to claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~, wherein the elongational flow is carried out at ~~the~~ a start of a liquefying process before shearing of the resulting fat based mixture in a shear mixer ~~such as a conche so as to significantly decrease the subsequent shearing time and/or to further reduce the viscosity at the final desired level.~~

Claim 14 (currently amended) Method according to claim 13, wherein a ~~the~~ final mixing is carried out in an in-line mixer to complete the addition of fat ~~and/or emulsifier~~.

Claim 15 (currently amended) Method according to claim 13, wherein a ~~the~~ final mixing is carried out in a batch type conche.

Claim 16 (currently amended) A device ~~Device~~ for reducing the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been refined to a powdery mass comprising ~~characterized in that it comprises~~ a die assembly comprising at least one die plate with a plurality of holes and a pressure generating device to exert a pressure on the mixture located upstream of the die assembly to force the powdery mass through the plurality of holes and thereby ~~creates~~ create an elongational flow ~~effective to achieve breaking up of the agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat.~~

Claim 17 (new) Device according to claim 16, wherein the at least one die plate comprises a plurality of small size holes having a size of from 0.5 to 20 mm.

Claim 18 (new) Device according to claim 16, wherein the holes form a tapered, parallel, flared profile as viewed from an inlet to an outlet of the holes.

Claim 19 (new) Device according to claim 16, wherein the at least one die plate comprises up to 200 holes.

Claim 20 (new) Device according to claim 16 wherein there are provided at least two separate die plates positioned in series in a barrel for serial passage of the fat based mixture through the die plates.

Claim 21 (new) A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising a powdery mass of solids and fat, the solids not being significantly coated with the fat, comprising the step of subjecting the powdery mass to an elongational flow that is sufficient to cause at least some of the agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat to break thereby providing a pasty mass having a coating of the solids with the fat, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate.